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To Whom It May Concern:

SUBJECT: STATE OF KANSAS FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

This letter is for a description of Kansas and its own Foster Care System defects. I feel that you should know that this town of Topeka, Kansas has its own skeletons in the closet that must be exposed and be dealt with. SRS (Social Rehabilitation Services) of Kansas and the handling of the foster care system have problems not only as reported recently in the Wichita area, there are real people and real stories that highlight this state and the way they handle the mental health services, SRS, and the court systems through out the state through blatant disregard for people's rights. My goal is for all families having their stories told as well as from the child's point of view of the system that is broken.

The reason I know is because my family has been a victim of this system and has had to deal with the systems first hand. I have seen first hand how going to the system to entrust my child's needs and asking for help for his behavioral and emotional needs. Not knowing where else to turn I asked for help from a system that label me as unfit and an unwanted as a parent, because, as a father, I went for help. I went into this action trusting in the fact these services were here to help all and not specific groups of people who fit what are considered the perfect family unit. Now that I have my life and my reputation back, I feel that I have come to the point where I can make sure that what has happened to me, will be a change and a challenge to the laws and policies needing to be followed and should be enforced effectively on all levels.

My son's story starts with me, as a father trying to ask for help from SRS to help with my son's diagnosis of ADHD, reactive Detachment Disorder and Disruptive Behavior Disorder. I needed help with understanding what I needed to do to stabilize our family. I was between jobs at the time and had signed him up for Health Wave to have support with obtaining mental health services and for evaluation of his needs. I was also diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder due to my son's mother murder when my son was only 7 months old. Through out the evaluations and testing for services with mental health, I was unable to receive supported services at that time. The initial testing from Jeannette Freeman, a prominent psychologist in the Topeka community, stated that both I and my son were a support system for each other and was promptly ignored by the social workers and court system to service their own view and time line. At the time of my son's and I highest need we were homeless and living in the homeless shelter. I went to SRS for support asking for help from a system that I thought was there for support for all people in need.

I was told that for my son to receive the best help for his needs, I would have to sign him over into SRS (foster care) for services. Since I was unemployed and living with my son in the homeless shelter in Topeka, Kansas, I made the decision to sign him into foster care. From the time my son was initially signed into custody, accusations against my family were negative and unrelenting. At this time, I was looking for work, trying to find a way to make a new life. I had to walk away from my girlfriend of the time and her children, due to accusations against me affecting her and her employment. The impact of these accusations was to limit my employment opportunities for working as a LPN, or even working as a cook at a nursing facility. I was unable to work in a field that I would be able to work at and be able to stabilize our lives. I often worked through temporary employment agencies or low paying service industry jobs to stabilize my life.

My mother, my son's grandmother, was told that she was too old to be an effective parent to my child or to even be a support for my child. My son's mothers' family was unwilling to take custody of my son for support. One of my sisters' attempted to gain custody of my son; the paperwork for them to apply for him through Kansas Children's Service League was conveniently lost time and time again. Through out this case with foster

care, I have several sisters, one in Kansas City, Missouri and one in Garland, Texas, that the foster care workers did not explore or even contact for possible placement for my son. My sisters had attempted several times to fill the paperwork out that Kansas Children's Service League to meet their requirements to provide support for my son, but some how never had the paperwork show up according to KCSL.

The biggest regret I have in my life was signing my son over and involving my family in the accusations and deceptions that had unfolded. Throughout my involvement with foster care I was accused of abuse and neglect. I had accusations of contributing to the murder of my sons' mother (Veronica) or being involved with the intent of murder without any formal evidence, other than accusation which gave the precedence to the accusations. I was determined to be an unfit parent to my son. Veronica's murderer was finally convicted and sentenced December 10, 2007. Her murderer was the cab driver taking her home to me and her children in August of 1993.

Within 3 months of being in foster care, my son was transferred to 3 different homes and through countless difficult transitions. I had only one in person contact with one social worker that was assigned to my son's case through KCSL, and my son's case had eight different social workers on his case. I only had two contacts with two of the social workers on his case within the first (6) six months of being involved with KCSL foster care. After the first six months, I was bared from seeing my son and within 18 months, my parental rights were terminated for the accusations made with out any support or evidence other than accusations and the views of social workers that had very little involvement with me or my son.

Through out this, I became very bitter and eventually found a way to provide an outlet for all parents and to focus a positive light to this negative situation. I had to leave the state of Kansas to start my business and express my passion in having families heard because of the lies and betrayal I have experienced. Know that if you want to solve a problem, you must step away to benefit an effective change. Now is the time, when I will be able to help other stories by printed along with mine. It is worth the effort and time to make sure we as parents get the services that we know are out there. If we do not know where the services are then the professionals in these systems should be able to use their knowledge for the benefit of the families who are asking for help.

Sincerely,

Sierra Stephenson, CEO/Founder IFRF